

Late Backup



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: February 16, 2017

SUBJECT: Walter E. Long Metro Park Master Plan Scope, Item 5 on Council's Agenda for Today

At the Tuesday February 14, 2017, work session Council discussed a desire to include as part of or, contemporaneously with the park master plan, a market feasibility analysis of non-recreational economic development uses on a portion of the parkland. Staff from Parks and Recreation, Capital Contracting Office, Economic Development, Law, and Financial Services met to develop the recommended option for implementing the additional scope of work.

As a reminder, the anticipated scope of work in the RFQ included a focus on market analysis, business planning and economic impact related to recreational facilities. While the RFQ acknowledges the possible impact to the economic revitalization of the surrounding community, this scope of work in the RFQ is specifically tied to recreational facilities and park development. Staff does not recommend expanding the scope to include non-recreational economic development analysis due to the fact that the respondents were not evaluated based on that criteria.

The staff recommendation is to approve the item today and continue to move forward with the existing scope of work for the Walter E. Long Master Plan contract as described in the RFQ, with a focus exclusively on recreation facilities. We also recommend bringing on board a separate economic development consultant to explore the non-recreation opportunities for this parkland.

The separate scope of work should complement the master planning work as well as support other important development initiatives in this portion of the Eastern Crescent. We believe that it is essential to ensure that the separate contract be coordinated with the timeline for the master plan, identify the parkland being considered for broader economic development purposes to allow for multiple scenarios to be developed in the master plan and, consider any limitations in law or otherwise for non-recreational use of the park property.

It is also important that the contracts are coordinated with the implementation phase of the Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative, an economic development project on 208 acres of City land adjacent to the park. The economic development recommendations for Walter E. Long Metro Park should complement and enhance the Colony Park Master Plan and planned unit development. The Economic Development Department is currently in the process of issuing a request for qualifications for a master developer to implement the Colony Park Master Plan. The City can better support the success of a future master development partner by facilitating projects that have positive synergy with the Colony Park development and other planned developments in the region.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

Cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Bert Lumberras, Assistant City Manager
Greg Canally, Acting Chief Financial Officer